THE National Demand

BY

Lok. TILAK

THE SONS OF INDIA, Ltd.

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THE NATIONAL DEMAND

The following resolution on Self-Government was passed at the Calcutta Session of the National Congress:

"This Congress expresses grateful satisfaction for the pronouncement made by His Majesty's Secretary of State for India on behalf of the Imperial Government that its object is the establishment of Responsible Government in India. This Congress strongly urges the necessity of the immediate enactment of a Parliamentary Statute providing for the establishment of Responsible Government in India, the full measure to be attained within a time limit, to be fixed in the Statute itself, at an early date. This Congress is emphatically of opinion that the Congress-League Scheme of Reforms ought to be introduced by the Statute as the first step in the process."

In supporting the above, Lok. Tilak delivered a remarkable speech of which the following is the full text:

"I have not the eloquence of my friend Mr. Bannerji, nor of my friend Mr. Jinnah, nor the trumpet voice of Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal. Yet I have to do a duty, and I mean to place before you without any introduction a few facts in support of the resolution which has been so ably moved by the proposer, seconded by the Hon. Mr. Jinnah and certainly not amended but intended to be amended by my friend Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal. The resolution, as you all know, is about Self-Government or Home Rule for India. The first paragraph of it says: 'This Congress expresses grateful satisfaction for the pronouncement made by His Majesty's Secretary of State for India on behalf of the Imperial Government that its object is the establishment of Responsible

Government in India.' The speaker who preceded me—I mean Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal—seems to think that it is not yet time to be grateful for the declaration of policy. To a certain extent I share in that view, but, at the same time, I cannot say that the wording of the resolution is not adequate. For gratitude, as you know, is defined by one of the best ethical writers of England to mean expectation of favours to come; and grateful satisfaction, translated in view of that definition, means satisfaction at the pronouncement attended with an expectation that the later stages of it will come in course of time as early as possible. That is how I interpret 'grateful satisfaction'. I am satisfied for the present that a thing that was not pronounced before has been declared now, and I hope, at the same time, nay expect, that it will be followed up by higher stages of

development in time to come. All talk about further stages is out of place at present. What should be the first step is the point that I want you to understand. A very simple definition of Home Rule which any of you including a peasant can understand is that I should be in my own country what an Englishman feels to be in England and in the Colonies. The simplest definition is that, and that is the whole of it. All those bombastic phrases, such as 'partnership in the Empire,' 'terms of equality,' etc., mean that I want to be in my country not as outlander but as master in the same sense that an Englishman is a master in his own country and in the Colonies. That is complete Home Rule, and if any one is going to grant it to-morrow, I shall be very glad for its introduction, for it will be Indian Home Rule granted all at once, but I see that it cannot be

done. Some compromise has to be made with those who are not in our favour and with some of our friends. The British power in India was introduced by a compromise, by a Charter. In fact, the first step in a province which you have not conquered is always with consent and compromise, and what the first step should be is explained in this resolution. All talk about future progress, about the establishment of Responsible Government in the Provinces and afterwards in the Central Government is a very good talk with which I fully sympathise but which I am not prepared to demand as the first step of the introduction of Home Rule in India. That is the difference between myself and Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal. He wants the whole hog at once. I say it should be granted to you by stages: demand the first step so that the introduction of the second step would be much more

easy than it is at present. The Government in the pronouncement has used the words "Responsible Government," not Home Rule or Self-Government. Mr. Montagu in the declaration and the Government of India in their Proclamation have deliberately used the words "Responsible Government" unfortunately without defining it, because Responsible Government, as naturally understood, means Executive Government responsible to the legislature. But in one place in Mr. Curtis's pamphlet I find that "responsible Government" is defined to be one where the legislature is subject to the executive. You will see that it is quite necessary to define the words "Responsible Government"; otherwise words may be interpreted quite contrary to our intention and it may be said : 'We promise you Responsible Government but a Government where the legislature ought to be under

the control of the Executive". And the more it is placed under the control of the Executive the more responsible it will become according to this. (Laughter.) I must state frankly here that this is not the kind of Responsible Government that we want. We understand by the words "Responsible Government," a Government where the executive is entirely responsible to the Legislature, call it Parliament or by any other name, and that legislature should be wholly elected. That is responsible Government, full responsible Government that we want. When I say that the Executive should be under the control of legislature, I go so far as to say that even Governors and Lieutenant-Governors must be elected by legislative bodies. That, however, will be the final step. But in the present circumstances I shall be quite content, and so I think most of you will be content, if the first step that we

demand is granted to you immediately, and Self-Government at an early date. And by 'early stages' I do not think that any sane man would understand to be anything which would be attained in fifty years, because a period extending to fifty years is not 'early'. Anything that exceeds the time of one generation is not 'early'. 'Early' means certainly in ordinary parlance ten or fifteen years. I should have liked that a definite number of years should have been introduced in this resolution. However, we do not lose much. I say that no sane man can understand 'early date' to mean other than ten or fifteen years. But some men thought that it would be rash to ask for Home Rule or Responsible Government in ten or fifteen years. It was dropped. Never mind. At any rate, the sense is there. I must draw your attention to the pronouncement made.

What is it? It is that full Responsible Government or merely Responsible Government without any qualifications —that means the same thing—Responsible Government without any limiting qualifications will be granted to you in ten or fifteen years. That part of the answer given by Mr.Montagu we note with grateful satisfaction in the sense in which I have just explained it. There are certain other conditions. That pronouncement says that it will be granted to you by stages. We also agree to it. The third part of the declaration is that these stages would be determined by the Government of India. We do not agree to that. We want the stages to be determined by us and not at the sweet-will of the Executive. Nor do we want any compromise about it but insist on definite stages and the time to be fixed in the Act itself so that the whole scheme may work automatically. There we differ

from the wording of the declaration: however it is not said here in so many words but the second paragraph of the resolution demands it: it demands a Parliamentary statute to be immediately passed definitely settling and fixing the time when the goal is to be reached, not leaving it to the Government of India to determine when and at what circumstances and in what stages they will grant full Responsible Government to us: definite time should be named in the statute which will be passed about the subject very soon. So, the second part of the resolution is practically a suggested modification of the declaration about which we have expressed our grateful satisfaction in the first part of the resolution. In the third paragraph of the resolution we stick to what was passed last year at Lucknow both by the Congress and the Muslim League. It has been said that that scheme is objectionable and

that after a year's experience we should have modified it at this Congress. I hold a different view. I am glad that we all hold the same view. (A cry of 'no,' 'no'.) That will be determined when we take the votes. If we unanimously pass the resolution it may be that I shall be speaking for you when you pass the resolution without a dissentient voice. I hold that the Congress-League scheme is the minimum which might be granted to us to satisfy our aspirations at present and to make a decent beginning in the introduction of Home Rule in India. I tell you why. There have been a number of schemes suggested at various places in India by Congress men and non-Congress men, by Muslim League men and non-Muslim League men and by backward and forward classes as they call themselves and by other different communities, and all these representations

have been sent up to the Secretary of State. What do you find if you analyse them? The majority of them say that they approve of the Congress-League scheme but they want something more, and if you take vote, you have all the votes for the Congress-League scheme and one vote for each scheme in the country. I say that that itself is an indication that the Congress-League scheme is approved all over the country and we are not going to take from it an inch. It has been said that the Government is prepared to grant to you Responsible Government but that you do not ask for it because the Congress-League scheme does not make Executive removable at the pleasure of the legislature: it cannot be technically said to be responsible. The pronouncement is that "Responsible Government" will be granted to you, that it should be granted to you by stages, so that the

first stage also must have something of Responsible Government. I do not think that that argument is right. The Government meaning is that one stage will be Municipal and Local, the second stage is provincial and the last stage is Central Government. That is not the meaning that I attach to it. I say that the Congress-League scheme does not provide for the removal of the Executive at the will of the legislature: true, but it gives you all the control over the Executive. We say that the Executive should be under the control of the legislature and that four-fifths of the legislative body should be elected. What does it mean? It means that the legislature which the Congress-League scheme demands will not be fully responsible in the sense of being able to remove the Executive, but it can transfer the Executive. If the Executive will not obey the legislature they may be

transferred to some other post. Why should you ask that the Executive should be removed? Once the Bureaucracy understands that they are responsible to the Legislative Councils, they are wise enough, intelligent enough to shape their future conduct accordingly: they are not fools. A beginning of the responsibility is made. The Executive are held responsible and they must take their orders from elected Legislative Councils. So, to say that the Congress-League scheme is not a beginning of Responsible Government is merely deceiving oneself and others by a use of words with which always wise and selfish men try to deceive the masses. The second objection urged against the Congress-League scheme is that it is better to begin from below, that it is better to build up from foundation than to begin with the top, so that you must begin with your Municipality, gradually

have District Boards under your control, then bring Provincial Governments under your control and then the Central Government. Even that argument is fallacious. The case may apply to the building of a new house where you cannot build the top without foundation, but the simile of a house does not apply to a political building, especially in the case of India. We in India are not children to be promoted from standard to standard until we pass our graduation either in Arts or in Law. We are full-grown people. We have had experience of governing Empires and Kingdoms in the past. (Cheers.) We fully know the art. Add to it that we have received western education which lays down certain principles of Government. We have learnt those principles and how to use those principles, having watched them so far in civilised countries. Are we not capable of carrying on

the Government of India from to-morrow if the Government is given into our hands? (Loud cheers.) When we say that Responsible Government should be granted to us by stages we cannot be meant to suppose that we should have training in Municipalities first, in District Boards afterwards, Provincial Legislative Councils next and then in the Supreme Legislative Council. There is no parallel between the two. The case of India is like that of an emasculated man who had lost or made to lose all his nervous power. In the case of a nervous disease, there is emasculation of the whole body and you have to begin the treatment with the brain and not with the toe. If you want to restore a man to health at once, you give tonic to the brain, the centre of all nervous system. So it is with India. If the present Government is unfit for the administration of the

country in the best interests of the Empire, the best remedy is to give tonic to the brain and that is Simla or Delhi. Unless that centre is made sound soon you cannot expect that any local remedy applied to the different parts of the body —to the foot or hand or other parts of the body—would be of any avail. So the Congress-League provides that we must have certain powers in the Central Government. If it is not made removable, we must at least be placed on a footing of equality. Half the members of the Executive should be our representatives, *i.e.*, they should be elected by the people. Thus we must go on building from the top. We do not want to divide the political Government in this country into parts, horizontal or vertical. We want to treat the whole man, and we want such cure to be administered as will cure his brain first and power over the lower limbs will gradually be

restored. Our scheme provides for that. To talk of Provincial Government when speaking of Imperial autonomy is to talk nonsense. We must have a share of the power in the Central Government. The control over the Municipalities remains with the Central Government, and you know how that power is being exercised and what actual independence you have in a Municipality. If you mean to have local Self-Government you must have power all through from top to bottom, *i.e.*, Responsible Government from top to bottom. In the Congress-League scheme it is provided that the Imperial Legislative Council should have four-fifths of its members elected and one-fifth nominated and that the legislature should have control over the Executive. I admit that this is not Responsible Government but it is really the beginning of Responsible Government. Take the case

of a minor whose estate is in charge of the Court of Wards. The minor having attained majority claims the estate from the Court of Wards. Suppose the defence of the Court of Wards is that they will transfer the power by parts, say the stables outside the house. What is the result? When that is done, the Court of Wards will say "We shall then think at a later date of transferring the whole house to the man." That defence would not be good enough in a Court of Law: any Judge will throw it away. The same is the case in this political struggle between the Bureaucracy and the Nation. Bureaucracy is the trustee of our interests. We have attained the age of majority; we claim our estate from Bureaucracy and men like Mr. Curtis are prepared to tell us: "Yes, we know that we shall have to transfer the whole power to you, but we shall see that it is transferred to you gradually when proper electorates

are brought into existence, and that at some time in the course of a century or two when the preparations are complete or according to the Hindu time, some time in this Kali Yuga we shall transfer the power to you." That kind of defence cught not to be allowed for one moment. We are entitled to the possession of the whole house, and if we allow you to share our power with you in that house, it is a concession made for you in the hope that you will soon clear out of it. You have managed the house so long; you have been living in the house; we will allow you to live in the house for a longer time, but eventually you must acknowledge that from to-day we are masters of the house; then alone there can be any compromise; otherwise, none. The first merit of the Congress scheme is that it asks for a transfer of power to the elective body in the Central Government

itself. Without a share—an equal share—in the Central Government, it is hopeless to be able to govern the smaller portions of the Empire, such as Municipalities, Local Boards, etc., with any sense of Responsible Government. You must banish from your mind the idea of building from the bottom. That is not the analogy applicable to our scheme. We consent to nothing less than what is embodied in the Congress-League scheme. We must have control over the Central Government. The Government of India is one body from the gods of Simla to the lowest police man in the village. If you want to grant our right, if you think that our claims are just, we must have a share at the top. All these arguments against our scheme are intended to deceive you and are advanced by people whose idea is to remain in possession of the house even though

we have attained our majority and are entitled to the possession of the whole house. Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal admitted that we must have the whole Congress scheme *plus* something more. I want also that *plus* and not *minus*. But I claim the first term of this equation to begin with, the other terms will follow, and I shall be one with him when we fight for the second stage, and I ask him and entreat him to be one with me in fighting for the first. The second merit of our scheme is that it tries to build upon the existing foundation. It is not a new scheme requesting the Government to introduce any modification in the machinery of the government. The machinery has been in existence for hundred years or more. We want the Secretary of State, we want the Imperial Government, we want the Local Governments, we want the Municipality, we want the District Board, and

we want also the Bureaucracy to stay in the land and not to go out of it. We all want these, but we want certain transference of power, a decentralisation which will vest people with power in every one of these institutions. We do not want to change the institutions. We do not say that India should be governed by a Crown Prince from England or that the administration should be transferred to any Native Chief. We say "Retain your administrative machinery as it is". Our question is not with machinery but with power. The Government of India is composed of legislative and executive. We want no changes in Governor, Governor-General and also Executive Councils but we want that the power that vests in the Executive should be transferred to the legislature. We do not want to disturb the machinery. We do not want a new machinery to be

introduced. What we want is that there are certain wheels in the machinery which have appropriated to themselves the power of regulating the machinery, and we want that power to be transferred to other wheels. It is no new scheme: it is a tried scheme, a tried machinery. All that is required is transfer of power from one part of the machinery to another. The Secretary of State should be deprived of the power of controlling the Government of India. The true Government of India should be in India. What next? The Bureaucracy also agrees with us that power should be transferred by the Secretary of State to the present Government of India. We want it transferred to the Government of India and that the Executive should be under the control of the legislature. At present about half the members are elected in the Legislative Council. What is the

objection to electing a few more? All objection falls to the ground when you remember that when so many Imperial Council members are elected now and do their work often to the satisfaction of Government, all that we ask for in our scheme is to have a few more members of that kind and give them power to control the Executive. We are to build upon the existing foundation. The objection that our scheme is unworkable, untried and that it has never been tried in other countries is useless and harmful to our interests if the objection is put in a language which may deceive the unwary. The second objection was that if we have half the Executive elected and half the Executive nominated, there would be a deadlock. It is said that one-half of the Executive will be fighting against the other half and that the conflict would make the administration nugatory. I say no.

Our scheme says that the Governor shall have the power of veto and he would decide which side is correct and the administration will not be hampered in any way at all. We have made provision for it, and that provision does not suit the Bureaucrats who are in power and they think that when power is shared like that they must act with greater respect to popular opinion. Lastly, I say that our scheme is better than any other scheme for another reason, and that reason is that no other scheme will be so compatible with the wishes of the British Parliament as ours is. Mr. Curtis and Sir Valentine Chirol have been forced—and I do not think quite willingly—to accept the pronouncement of the Government as the basis of future work. Government having declared the policy—those two gentlemen would have been very glad if the Government had not declared their policy—they

have accepted that policy. But what are they trying to do with it? Given that proclamation, how much of it, in fact what is the lowest proportion of it, that can be conceded to the people? They wish to draw the minimum length provided for in that proclamation. That is the problem before Mr. Curtis and Sir Chirol. Our problem is how long the line can be drawn. I must warn you not to accept any other scheme or to be carried away by it, simply because the author of it professes to limit it. I therefore commend this resolution for your unanimous acceptance. (Loud and prolonged cheers.)"

Speeches of

Lok. Tilak.

This collection of his speeches, published recently, contains all his recent political addresses.

Lok. TILAK

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PRICE 4 As. EACH

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10, ESPLANADE, MADRAS.

The B. I. Press, Madras.